

**THE
MOUNTBATTEN
SCHOOL**

Poetry Festival

1980

The Mountbatten School Poetry Festival, 1980

Poems are places where words come alive. Signs of life were what I was looking for and there were plenty of them in these poems, discernible in a variety of ways. I valued a number of striking images: the nuthatch described as 'a sleek torpedo of feathers', the village church standing on 'a grave-littered hill'; the collection of comparisons in Black Hole and the excellently sustained metaphor in Winter. I was often aware of the vivid life of particular phrases, either for their sound, as in 'icicled silence' and 'innocent puddles'; or for the compression of an idea, as when the writer of Now describes the moment 'now' as 'the motto of impulse'; or for their tactile quality, as in the paths that 'turn crispy' at the touch of the mysterious and threatening Converter. Many writers, too, showed a pleasing sense of the formal qualities of poetry. I was impressed particularly by the ambitious attempts to control sound and metre in pieces such as The Nuthatch, My Favourite Place, Magic and Time Energy, all poems from the younger entrants. I tried to listen for the individual voice and favoured poems where the writer spoke of feelings and thoughts that were peculiarly his own and not self-consciously 'poetic'. One poem stood out as a carefully made piece, where feeling and form were harmonised: in Summer Camp 1932 Elizabeth Bryant shows a degree of control over the medium that has real promise.

Mike Benton

MY FAVOURITE PLACE

I like going to the pictures,
Full of thrills and spills and frights
We see all the big-hit movies
Every Saturday night.

Sometimes the screen is so big
And the music is so loud,
You think you are part of the film,
But as the music fades and the picture dims,
You realise you're part of the crowd.

Outside they are changing the stars on the boards,
Next week the people will come in their hoards,
A new film will be on,
Will it be crime?
Will it be space?
Or will it be horror with a terrible face?

John Griffiths 1F

Thunder, Lightning,
Bats flying,
Darkness,
Icicled silence.

I walk nervously
Up the winding path,
And to the door.
I knock,
Every bone shaking in my body.
The door opens with a creak,
No-one's there.
I step in and stare.

My eyes scan the place
And pinpoint every cobweb in the room.
A bat!
Its leathery wings,
Fill the room with a musty smell.
I take no notice.
I get out the bucket
And the soap.
Better start work.

Sarah Serls 1H

The Nuthatch

A sleek torpedo of feathers,
A blue back and pink chest,
Facing all weathers,
Black eyestripe, white face,
A cheery small bird,
One of the best.

Straight up the trees
He wants his grub,
Weevils, not bees,
Upside-down on a branch,
He looks rather comic,
His nature, quite smug.

He can do things,
We humans can't,
He has two wings,
They let him fly,
Though he prefers climbing trees,
We can, but daren't.

We're watching birds in the sky,
In the trees and hedges,
The long-tailed tits are so high,
Up in the trees,
In the New Forest,
With others amongst the sedges.

WISHFUL THINKING

To be as strong as a lion,
That great beast king;

To soar like a bird,
Gliding on wing;

To be as wise as an owl,
The night hunting bird;

Or to sing like a nightingale,
That I once heard;

For the memory of an elephant,
The biggest of them all;

But the blindness of a bat,
Not at all;

To be strong, to soar;
To be wise, to sing;

For all of these,
I'd give anything.

Christopher Burrows 1K

The Converter

Creep, creep across the liquids
As they change matter;
Moonlight shines behind him,
Sparkling in the misty glass.
Grasses sway in the wind. 'Stop!'
They turn to statues.

He creeps over the surface,
As innocent puddles lie,
Hopelessly shivering,
Awaiting his touch.
Paths turn crispy,
As he leaves no prints behind.

Christopher Orr 2T

The Old Grey House

The old old house
Lay quiet and still,
No movement from within,
No curtains at the windows,
No knocker on the door,
No cheerful laughter ever heard
From within its great grey walls.
No human ever entered,
For spirits lived within,
But for those that could hear
And for those that could see
The old grey house was full of life.
Its walls were full of laughter
Of those that lived before.
What did it matter
If no curtains graced the windows
And no knocker graced the door?

Janet Tonge 2F

A FIGHT OF WORDS

"I hate you, I hate you!"

Screamed Anne to Sue.

"I hate you, you smell, I hate you too!"

"Shut up, go away, get out of my sight!"

"If I were a boy I'd give you a fight."

"You baby, You baby,

Only little girls cry."

"I'm not crying you fibber, shut up and
don't lie."

"I'm going, I'm fed up, I think you're a bore."

"Oh good, I don't care about you anymore."

Louise Hodgskiss 2J

MRS. GALE AND THE MIRROR

The Boy Scouts asked
Old Mrs. Gale:
"Please, something
For our Jumble Sale."
She said, "I think,
Upon a nail
In our old attic
Mr. Gale
Has hung a mirror,
Old and frail.
I'll give that
For your Jumble Sale."
But her husband, Bill,
Let out a wail
When he heard of
The Boy Scouts' sale.
"That glass," he said,
"Was Chippendale!"
After the sale,
They knew not where
The glass had gone.
Bill tore his hair,
For weeks he searched,
In great despair.
But now they're both,
A happy pair.
The mirror's back,
Above the stair,
It turned up still,
Without repair
At the Boy Scouts'
Christmas Fair!

Winter

The land is awash
Under waves of snow,
A vanished land beneath
The sea of white.
A cold calm is
Set upon the sea,
So not a thing moves,
The waters are still.
Skeletons of trees
Stick out of the sea,
Bare and dead.
The waterlocked hedges
Break the monotony of the sea,
They are as barbed wire
on a dead wartime beach.
A frozen bird, one
of the fallen,
Lies dead at the
Foot of a blasted oak.
Its once proud body
crumpled and dead,
Afloat in the cold
waters of a frozen hell.
It has lost all vestige of pride,
But yet gaining a tragic beauty
That only death can give.
Everything is still and dead,
No living thing is left.
From Horizon to Horizon
All is a cold white
Limbo of death,
The moon like a jewel in the sky.

Huw Thomas 3Y

BLACK HOLE

Dustbin of the universe
Conception of no distinct limits
The entrance to a new existence
Desultry home of antonyms
Mind stretcher
Sparer of none
Swallower of stars
Dreaded by none but the wise
Roving ghost or bottomless pit
The final home of our planet
A hell with its fires extinguished
The full stop in the sentence of life.

Nicholas Stedman 3H

MAGIC

Let's travel away from the magic of things,
Like wizards and witches and things of that nature
That spellbind a child,
And make him have nightmares and horrible dreams
About ghoulies and goblins with glaring green
 eyeballs
That eat you at night with their horrible teeth,
Or take you away to their towering castles,
And cast you away from the world that is known.

Let's travel into the magic of things,
Like castles and princes
And things of that nature
That enchant a child.
And let wishes come true from his deepest dreams
About elves and fairies
with glittering jewels like rubies,
or sapphires, they shine on forever.
They have flashing blades of gold
and silver
To cut through the evil that swells around,
And send it a-wailing down to the ground.
Now let us move on from this land of
enchantment
To another place where magic is stowed.

We've travelled away,
To a land of all dreaming.
Where time has no place
And time has no meaning,
Where one lives on
With a magical feeling
Of being in love with a place that's your own.

Time Energy

A flock of sheep wanders between the pillars of stone,
The ancient memorials of days gone by,
When they sacrificed their captives alone,
And no one heard the cry.

The sheep, those timid,woolly beasts,
Dismiss the ancient powers there,
Where men of old consumed great feasts,
And sent spells wandering on the air.

The Towers of Strength, their powers immense,
Send forth a message to the land,
Everything still, everything tense,
The Earth bows down to something grand.

The sheep, unaware and unafraid,
Move aimlessly away,
To live on the power that the stones have made,
Created on such a day.

Rupert Marsh 3K

The House

Dirty, stained wallpaper
Peels from dampened walls.
All that lives here is the musty smell
Of a decomposing chair.
Damp decay attacks its covers.

Moths cling to the smeary panes
Entangled in webs and dust;
Butterflies, once brightly coloured,
Lie dead and dull on the sill.

As I walk through the rooms,
The echoes of my feet surround,
Enclose me - amplified.
The only sign of life
In this damp, forgotten place.

Jane Orr 4F

PRISONER

Fingers clasped the juttred sill
But found no refuge.
The bitten nails,
Chewed in times of hunger,
Scratched and scraped
Until iron was held.
The fading colour reddened
as the grip tightened.
Sickened muscles flexed
As the loyal joints
Tried to reunite the decaying body.
Failing, the pressure slackened
And the exploring resumed.
Outwards, the hand stretched,
Past the bars and on.
It grabbed air,
The last taste of freedom.
Then, knowing flight was impossible,
It sank to the floor.

Esther Walker 4K

Village

Silent it sits,
Deep in the palm of the valley,
Parted from the sea,
By sun swept downs.

A church stands,
High on a grave-littered hill,
Looking out on life,
Lord of the valley.

Cottages sleep,
Deep in the blanketing combs.
Singing streams tumble,
Through woody steepes.

Huddles to the down,
A neatly dressed station.
A rare train hums,
Impatiently awaiting the signal's nod.

Tidy wives chatter,
Fussing on feminine matters.
Bothered babies suffer
With feelings we can't understand.

Slow careless living,
One step behind time
Caught up in itself,
A secret hidden paradise.

Richard Franklin 4D

A Different Tune For Life

Dark design
Child in time.
Running free:
Where I wish to be.

To be proclaimed.
To be un-lame.
Not tied down.
The web of normal life.

Will I die?
Will I try
To live?
Wish I was there.

Standing black
Standing "blues"
Forever:
Walking in the shadow.

Singing; shouting.
A thousand chanting.
Moving fast:
Not forever plain.

Gary Doe 4Q

SUMMER CAMP 1932

Bronzed, blond and blue eyed
They chatter under the sun,
Khaki clad they converge by the campfire
And sing,
Sing praise to their Fuhrer.
These budding thorns of a blooming reality
Sing.

"My little petals", he said proudly,
And they smiled and saluted;
Home thoughts dissolved by propaganda,
(Goebbels, the family man, saw to that.)

"Children of the Fatherland", he calls,
And they cheer and shout

"Sieg Heil".
Thrusting arms proudly forward,
They sing,
Obedient servants of the Third Reich,
Sing,
Hitler's little children,
Sing.

Elizabeth Bryant 5Q

NOW

Now, is the constant syllable ticking from the clock of
time.

Now, is the motto of impulse.

Now, is on the banner of reform.

Cherish your today and prize it highly

Before it is swallowed into the void of the past

Or sacrificed for the unreal promise of tomorrow.

Michael Terry 5J

UNCERTAINTY

Solitude,
A whispering breeze
Disturbs loose hay
Scattered,
Upon the damp floor.
A flapping pigeon
Descends
On rotting beams
Of,
High lofty rafters.

Empty troughs,
Rusting metal,
Bale string trailing on a post.
A wooden half-door
Creaks,
As it swings on one hinge.
Cobwebbed windows,
Glass amiss,
View, blankly;
The vacant yard.

An ageing cow
Calf at foot,
Chomps,
On grassy patches,
Soft bellowing...
Distant,
Carried on southerly breezes.

The puddled ground,
The stark, greyness
Of a wintry sky.
The absence of
Voices,
Clanking of metal buckets,
Sweeping brushes,
The stamping of hooves.

Enclosed by a battered gate,
The silent yard,
Delapidation,
A sign of past prosperity.
Eerie contentment,
Unspoken memories,
And an uncertain fate...

AND YOU?

Attracted by designers' propaganda
The square is filled.
High fashion,
Daubed faces,
Bitching over labels,
Peas in a pod.
Puppets who dance to the strings of editors,
Bow to the glossy puppeteer.
Dolls whose broken heads reveal identical plastic.

And the individual?
He, despised by this society, retires to be cynical
at a distance.

Jackie Mansfield 5F

